United Nations A/63/126

General Assembly

Distr.: General
14 July 2008
English
Original: Arabic/English/Spanish

Sixty-third session
Item 91(m) of the preliminary list*
General and complete disarmament

Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation

Report of the Secretary-General

Contents

		Page
I.	Introduction	2
II.	Replies received from Governments	2
	Cuba	2
	Netherlands	4
	Panama	5
	Qatar	6
	Spain	7

* A/63/50.

08-42210 (E) 280708 280708

I. Introduction

1. On 5 December 2007, the General Assembly adopted resolution 62/27, entitled "Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation". In paragraph 8 of the resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States on the issue of the promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation and to submit a report thereon to it at its sixty-third session.

2. Pursuant to that request, on 15 February 2008, a note verbale was sent to Member States inviting them to provide information on the subject. The replies received are reproduced in section II below. Additional replies received will be issued as addenda to the present report.

II. Replies received from Governments

Cuba

[Original: Spanish]
[11 June 2008]

1. Cuba reaffirms that multilateralism is essential today, including in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, and reiterates the views that it set out in the reply it conveyed, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 61/62, to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, reproduced in his report (A/62/133).

2. The complex international situation and the need for a collective response to the pressing problems besetting humanity confirm the importance of the resolution on the promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, as a contribution to the debate and to the search for effective and lasting solutions in these areas.

3. The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries plays an active part in the promotion of multilateral solutions to the issues currently facing us with regard to disarmament and arms control. At its fifteenth summit, held in Cuba in 2006, its leaders reaffirmed their positions of principle and updated guidelines for the Movement's work.

4. The United Nations, its Charter and international law continue to be essential and vital for the preservation and maintenance of international peace and security and the strengthening of international cooperation. The United Nations, with its almost universal membership and well-founded international legitimacy, and multilateralism continue to play a central role in considering the pressing problems and global challenges currently facing all States.

5. Responsibility for steering and achieving economic development and social progress worldwide and for addressing threats to international peace and security must be shared among all States and exercised multilaterally through the United Nations.

6. In recent years, humanity has witnessed the devastating effects of aggression against Iraq. The massacre of civilians, including children, women and the elderly; the displacement of millions of people; the proliferation of terror; and the

destruction of a cultural heritage of universal value are among the main consequences of what today no one doubts to be one of the greatest human tragedies. It could all have been avoided if an effort had been made to seek multilaterally agreed solutions under the aegis of the United Nations, before embarking on military adventures.

7. Multilateralism cannot be strengthened without a comprehensive, far-reaching reform of the United Nations, which continues to be the central and essential forum for tackling issues relating to international cooperation for economic development and social progress, peace and security, human rights and the rule of law, on the basis of dialogue, cooperation and consensus-building among States.

8. The purpose of reform is to make the United Nations development system a more effective and efficient means of supporting poor countries, and thereby to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, on the basis of their national development strategies, while ensuring that this reform effort promotes organizational efficiency and produces concrete results in terms of development.

9. Cuba has the honour to chair the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries for the period 2006-2009 and has focused its efforts on strengthening the Movement's actions so that it can contribute more effectively to deliberations and negotiations on disarmament and arms control, among other related subjects. Cuba considers that this will help to strengthen multilateralism, taking also into account that the 118 countries that make up the Movement form the vast majority of States Members of the United Nations.

10. Positive multilateral experiences in the area of disarmament and arms control have had a significant impact and influence on international peace and security. Examples include the biological and chemical weapons conventions, which have led to firm commitments to the total elimination of such weapons of mass destruction. Unfortunately, this has not been possible in the case of nuclear weapons, owing to the adamant opposition of some nuclear Powers, chief among them the United States of America, which refuse to honour their commitments under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

11. The disarmament and arms control agreements negotiated and implemented within the multilateral framework provide a suitable mechanism for States parties to consult one another and to cooperate in solving any problems that may arise in relation to their objectives or the application of their provisions, and they allow such consultations and cooperation to be also undertaken through appropriate international procedures within the framework of the United Nations and in accordance with its Charter.

12. The continuous erosion of multilateralism in the field of arms regulation, non-proliferation and disarmament, and the application of unilateral measures by some States Members of the United Nations to solve their security problems, jeopardize international peace and security and undermine confidence in the international security system as well as the foundations of the United Nations itself.

13. The General Assembly of the United Nations, as the Organization's most representative and democratic body, must play a central role in efforts to strengthen the multilateral approach. Cuba will continue to make every possible effort towards the achievement of that goal.

Netherlands

[Original: English]
[23 June 2008]

1. At the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, the Netherlands abstained from voting on General Assembly resolution 62/27, "Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation".

2. The Netherlands hereby wishes to reply to the request of the Office of Disarmament Affairs for the views of the Governments of the Member States on the issues addressed by the resolution, for consideration by the General Assembly at its sixty-third session, and to paragraph 8 of that resolution, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States on the issue of the promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

3. The principle of multilateral cooperation is an important aspect of global disarmament and non-proliferation. The Netherlands shows its commitment to this principle by continuing to develop a legally binding system of international treaties and legislation. Besides giving its full support to United Nations resolution 1540, the Netherlands participates actively in many multilateral efforts concerning disarmament and non-proliferation, such as those pursued under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

4. General Assembly resolution 62/27 contains many elements in which the importance of multilateralism and international cooperation in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation is underlined. It stresses that the peaceful settlement of disputes, international cooperation, dialogue and confidence-building measures contribute to the creation of friendly multilateral and bilateral relations among peoples and nations. Multilateralism is reaffirmed as the core principle in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation and all States are urged to participate in multilateral negotiations on arms regulation, non-proliferation and disarmament.

5. However, the language in which resolution 62/27 conveys this message of multilateralism is too divisive to enable it to do so credibly. The resolution addresses the actions of individual Member States in such a way that it does more harm to the cause of multilateralism than it constructively works to improve international cooperation.

6. With regard to the issue of non-compliance, this resolution suggests that States party to the relevant instruments on weapons of mass destruction should consult and cooperate among themselves in cases of non-compliance and concerns about implementation. The Netherlands believes, however, that all States should join the process of multilateral deliberation and show their commitment to non-proliferation and disarmament. To turn away from international discussions regarding compliance with international rules is to turn away from the idea of multilateralism. Non-compliance with international rules is a serious issue facing the international community, especially in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. It is an issue which can best be addressed through cooperation and multilateralism. This resolution undermines that very notion.

7. General Assembly resolution 62/27, "Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation", rightly draws attention to the multilateral approach to disarmament and non-proliferation. Unfortunately, its effect is more divisive and undermining than it is constructive. The Netherlands therefore abstained from voting on this resolution.

Panama

[Original: Spanish]
[27 May 2008]

1. A number of agreements, conventions and other multilateral instruments relating to disarmament and non-proliferation are in force in the Republic of Panama. Panama has always welcomed multilateralism and promotes it as a means to regulate and control disarmament and non-proliferation.

2. In this context, the Panamanian State recognizes the need to promote the adoption, at the international level, of new multilateral mechanisms governing the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, since these matters transcend borders and represent a global problem that concerns all countries.

3. It should be emphasized that, although Panama does not produce nuclear, bacteriological or chemical weapons, the Government has taken the necessary steps at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels to combat the proliferation of such weapons and their possible acquisition by terrorist groups.

Qatar

[Original: Arabic]
[7 April 2008]

1. Qatar is firmly committed to promoting multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, and considers it an important negotiating tool in achieving a range of goals. Qatar is a party to all the relevant conventions, namely, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, the Biological Weapons Convention, and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and is an active participant in the pertinent conferences, seminars and meetings. It is also a member of the Non-Aligned Movement. Qatar stresses that comprehensive and complete disarmament and non-proliferation are both of the greatest importance and inseparable.

2. Qatar believes that it is very important to make progress towards universal, multi-lateral, non-discriminatory and transparent armament control, non-proliferation and disarmament, with the aim of achieving comprehensive and complete disarmament under strict international supervision, thereby according international legitimacy to the relevant negotiations.

3. Qatar calls for the development of disarmament and non-proliferation strategies and hopes that the NPT Review Conference in 2010 will be successful. It would also like to see accelerated application of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Spain

[Original: Spanish]
[16 June 2008]

1. Both Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and the European Union Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction identify the proliferation of these types of weapon and their means of delivery as a threat to international peace and security. Spain is aware of this threat and is addressing the challenge through determined use of all the available instruments and policies, giving preference to a multilateral approach.

2. Spain is committed to the system of multilateral treaties that constitute the legal and regulatory framework for combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Spanish foreign policy therefore reflects a firm commitment to the multilateral non-proliferation system and a clear aspiration to achieve the universality of the major treaties in this area.

3. In order to ensure that a disarmament and non-proliferation system functions effectively, it must be multilateral in nature and based on genuine compliance by States with their obligations. This multilateral approach, in addition to increasing the system's effectiveness, gives it important legitimacy.

4. However, if the multilateral treaty system is to remain credible and effective, compliance must be reinforced, the detection of significant violations must be improved and the enforcement of established prohibitions and norms must be strengthened, for example through the criminalization of violations committed.

5. Non-proliferation should be a cross-cutting policy that extends across the whole of foreign policy and is integrated into other policies, involving all activities and resources. Therefore, in order to make non-proliferation policy more effective, it should be integrated both into broader areas of policy and into bilateral relations.

6. The multilateral approach should also prevail in bilateral relations, so that measures are considered and put in place to improve the implementation of the instruments in force.

7. In this context, it could be very useful to establish a permanent framework for action, including dialogue with our neighbouring countries and the use of a non-proliferation clause in bilateral and regional relations.

8. The effectiveness of the international system needs to be improved; this requires more cohesive instruments, greater political commitment and more legally binding agreements. Regulations must require compliance with the obligations entered into by States and foster the promotion of rigorous and transparent verification systems that are accepted by all States. The capacity for consensus also needs to be broadened so as to establish legal frameworks conducive to the effective advancement of peace, security, cooperation and global progress. In this regard, it is vital to agree on an agenda for the Conference on Disarmament with a view to reactivating this important multilateral forum on disarmament and non-proliferation.

9. The Spanish Government believes that a responsible non-proliferation and disarmament policy requires the promotion of an effective multilateral system. To that end it will be necessary:

- To seek comprehensive political solutions that prevent, discourage or stop recourse to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or conventional weapons;
- To integrate policy on non-proliferation and disarmament into general security policy;
- To consider the possibility of including a "non-proliferation clause" in bilateral and regional relations;
- To promote the universality, defence and strengthening of international treaties, conventions, agreements and regimes;
- To strengthen the role of the United Nations Security Council;
- To promote the national implementation of international obligations;
- To improve the effectiveness of verification mechanisms through political, economic and technical support and to make them more intrusive;
- To strengthen systems of import and export control with respect to defence and dual-use materials and to increase the number of parties to such systems;
- To promote international information exchange;
- To strengthen technical assistance among States and cooperation for development;
- To promote legal and responsible trade;
- To facilitate collaboration among government agencies, non-governmental organizations and industries that share the same objective.

10. Only an effective multilateral system can successfully tackle the threat to international peace and security posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, together with other phenomena such as international terrorism, transnational organized crime and poverty.